

Meeting Summary

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Issues Task Force

November 18, 2003 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. and November 19, 2003, 8:30 a.m. – 4:45 pm
SeaTac, WA

Members Present

Steve Tharinger, Chair; Shirley Solomon; Craig Partridge; Julie Dagnon; Doug St. John; Laura Johnson; Steve Leider; Jim Kramer; Steve Martin; Tim Smith; Tom Laurie; Jeff Breckel (via phone); Jim Fox.

Also present: Brian Walsh, Rollie Geppert, Dave Renstrom, Richard Brocksmith, and Doug Osterman.

Proposed Approach to the Fifth Grant Round

The meeting opened with discussion regarding the draft document *Proposed Approach for Project Evaluation, Allocation of Funds, and the Role of the Review Panel and Technical Advisors*. Jim Fox presented an overview of the major recommendations in the document and Shirley Solomon summarized the discussion and recommendation from the LEAG meeting held on November 14th. The ITF also was provided copies of comments from: Keith Wolf, Steve Martin, Lee Napier, Monica Daniels, Nature Conservancy, Mike Johnson, Skagit Land Trust, Ron Craig, Dave Renstrom, John Thompson, and Martha Neuman.

The ITF reached the following conclusions and recommendations to the SRFB regarding the *Proposed Approach*. Recommendations will be incorporated into the next draft of the document and circulated for public review prior to the December 4-5 SRFB meeting.

Allocation Formula

- Thirty-five percent of the funds available for the Fifth Round should be preallocated; fifty-five percent should be awarded by the SRFB in December of 2004 based on evaluation of the fit of lead entity lists fit to the lead entity strategies; and ten percent allocated by the SRFB in December of 2004 to provide additional funding for partially-funded projects that would otherwise not be able to be completed.
- The thirty-five percent preallocation would consist of four increments. The largest would be distributed equally among the lead entity lists. The next largest would be allocated to lead entity lists based on the number of listed species in the lead entity area; the next largest would be allocated to lead entity lists based on the total number of salmonid river-miles in the lead entity

area; and the smallest increment would be allocated to lead entity lists from lead entities that are also doing salmon recovery planning at a Recovery Region scale. The Upper Columbia would have a choice of receiving an allocation for functioning as three lead entities or receiving a portion of the allocation for functioning as a regional planning area. They should continue to submit one list of projects for their three lead entities. Other parameters to guide preallocation priorities that were suggested but rejected: human population, miles of marine shoreline, lead entity area (acres), number of WRIAs in each lead entity area.

Timeline

- The early interaction of the Review Panel and lead entity participants to discuss the lead entity strategy should be optional and should be scheduled according to the needs of the lead entity. The purpose would be to give Review Panel members an opportunity to improve their understanding of the strategy and to provide lead entities with comments. The Review Panel would not evaluate the strategy, nor would there be an expectation that the lead entity would revise the strategy prior to soliciting projects. However, lead entities may want to clarify confusing parts of their strategy (including the strategy summary) or choose projects in areas where their strategy is seen to be strongest or most specific.
- The early interaction of the Technical Advisors with lead entities (and possibly project applicants) would be optional and would be scheduled and structured based on the needs of the lead entity. At these meetings Technical Advisors would identify projects of special concern that have the potential for being “red-flagged” later in the process. This would give project applicants time to modify the project and lead entities notice about issues that might be of concern later in the evaluation process.
- After projects are submitted to the SRFB and after the Technical Advisors evaluate the technical soundness and “red flag” those they believe are not sound, there would be a two-week period for lead entities and project applicants to review the results and possibly modify projects accordingly.
- After the Review Panel evaluates the fit of each lead entity list to the lead entity’s strategy and produces a written summary of its findings, there would be a two week period for lead entities to review the results and then meet with the Review Panel, if necessary, to discuss the results.
- On the timeline (Attachment V), it should be made clear which dates are established by lead entities and which are established by the SRFB.
- The SRFB should establish a schedule and deadlines for the Fifth Round at its December meeting.

Evaluation of Lead Entity Strategies

The ITF agreed that it would be unfair to evaluate the quality of lead entity strategies for the Fifth Grant Round since there has been too little time for lead entities to react to the comments from the Fourth Round Technical Panel and the new *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*. However, the ITF recognized that it is meaningless to evaluate how well a lead entity's list of projects addresses the priorities identified in the lead entity's strategy if the strategy is vague, nonspecific, or lacks focus. Therefore the ITF recommends that the Review Panel evaluates the specificity and focus of each strategy in addition to the fit of the project list to the strategy.

Evaluation of a Project List's "Fit to Strategy"

The ITF agreed to the evaluation categories in Attachment III, *Proposed "Fit to Strategy" Evaluation Criteria*. There was some concern that since the categories are the same as those in the new *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*, this was effectively making the *Guide* mandatory rather than optional. However, the ITF concluded that any good strategy should have these elements and it makes sense to be consistent with the *Guide*.

The ITF agreed that a numerical evaluation system to rate how well a project list fits the strategy is a good approach. Two ways to use the scores were suggested. First, divide the total funding available by the total number of points for the 24 project lists to obtain "dollars per point," which would then be used to allocate funds to each list. Second, to provide the SRFB with the scores and a Review Panel narrative about each list. The Board would determine an allocation based on this information.

Other evaluation criteria explored by the ITF but rejected included: evaluating the overall quality of each project list from a state-wide perspective; evaluating the cost-effectiveness of each project list; evaluating the track record of past projects submitted by the lead entity.

Marine Nearshore Projects

Tim Smith presented a proposal for evaluating marine nearshore projects in the Fifth Grant Round. The ITF agreed to the following recommendations:

- Encourage all parties with interests in the marine nearshore are participate in the lead entity process.
- Urge that all lead entities, nearshore project sponsors, SRFB Technical Advisors and the SRFB Review Panel use the technical resources identified by the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration (PSNER) Science Team. A list of PSNER publications will be included in the Fifth Round application materials.

- When SRFB Technical Advisors are evaluating projects for technical soundness the nearshore projects would be reviewed by a separate nearshore science team. One of the nearshore representatives from the Technical Advisors would be the liaison to this science team.
- Although the SRFB would only need a determination that a nearshore project is technically sound, the nearshore science team would evaluate and rate nearshore projects for its “fit to the PSNER guidance report” published earlier this year and possible Army Corps of Engineers funding. Projects that are not funded as part of a lead entity list could be considered for funding through these other programs and would already have been evaluated.

Defining “Restoration”

The ITF reviewed the memo entitled *Defining Restoration in the SRFB’s 5th Round Salmon Grant Cycle* dated October 15, 2003. It was agreed that acquisition is a necessary cost for restoration projects that could not be accomplished without purchasing the land. Examples mentioned included dike setbacks. The ITF also agreed that some types of feasibility studies, such as a study to site and design a specific project, are essential components of a restoration project.

How to Adjust SRFB Allocations to Lead Entity Lists if There Are Insufficient “Non-Restoration” Funds.

With an estimated \$28.4 million available for the SRFB in the 2003-05 biennium (before Federal FY 05) and a statutory requirement that the Board spend at least \$23,187,500 on restoration, there may be only approximately \$5.2 million available for acquisition, assessment and programmatic grants that are not directly related to restoration. It is likely that such requests will exceed this amount. The ITF recommended that the limit on funding for “non-restoration” projects (projects that do not fit the SRFB’s definition of restoration) be prorated across the lead entity lists in proportion to their total allocation.

Caps

At a previous meeting the ITF recommended all SRFB grants be limited to a dollar amount somewhere between \$500,000 and \$750,000. Several ITF members suggested that the ITF revisit this decision in light of the new proposed funding approach. The ITF was unable to reach a consensus on this issue and referred it to the SRFB. The staff report to the Board will list advantages and disadvantages of imposing caps on SRFB grants.

Definitions of Benefits and Certainty

The ITF recommended that lead entities be required to use the revised definitions of *benefits* and *certainty*. However, lead entities would be able to supplement benefit and certainty criteria with their own additional evaluation criteria. Staff will release the revised definitions for public review and comment.

The Future of the ITF

ITF recommends that it continue to be a forum for discussion of future SRFB policy issues. The next meeting will be in the second week of January to discuss any unresolved issues from the December SRFB meeting, review the final fifth Round manuals before they are published, meet with Review Panel members to discuss their role in the Fifth Grant Round (if scheduling permits), and to begin discussing revisions to *SRFB Mission, Roles and Responsibilities, and Funding Strategy* which was last revised by the SRFB in September of 2001.